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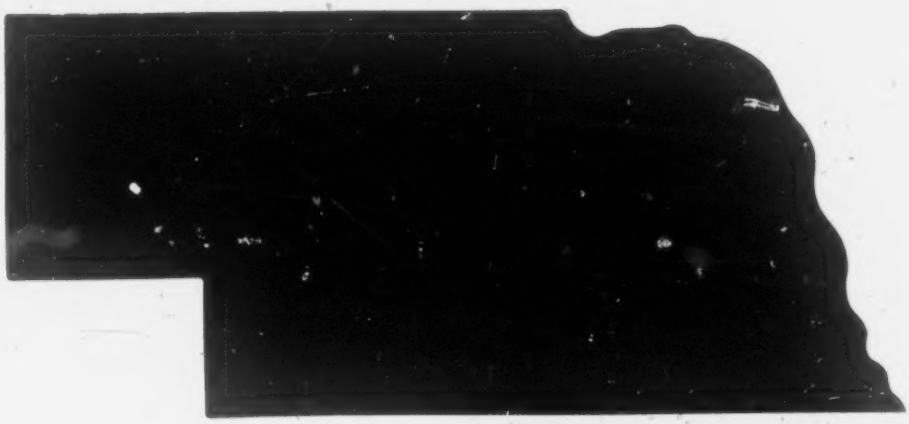

NEBRASKA ANNUAL SOCIAL INDICATORS SURVEY

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SUPPORT FOR PROGRAMS RELATED TO ALCOHOL PROBLEMS

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Price: $ .75

The Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey

Helen A. Moore - 1982 Study Director

The findings in this report are based on data collected in the sixth Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey (NASIS). This survey is part of an on-going study of the quality of life in Nebraska conducted by the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The sample for NASIS consists of 1907 respondents eighteen years of age or older residing in households in Nebraska. The sample is selected through a process called random digit dialing: within each three-digit prefix in the state, four-digit numbers are selected randomly from all possible four-digit numbers to complete the telephone number. Respondents are further chosen randomly from the adults in the household and interviewed by telephone by experienced, professional interviewers from the offices of the Bureau of Sociological Research. All interviewing was done between February and April of 1982. This procedure produces a high-quality, representative sample of Nebraska adults. Analysis shows the sample to be representative of the state on age, sex, race, and geographical distribution.

The interview averaged approximately 47 minutes and included questions about energy use, health, recreation, political attitudes, occupation, education, family life, and other matters reflecting the quality of life experienced in the state. For the entire sample, the chances are 95 in 100 that the true value for the population lies within a range equal to the reported survey percentage plus or minus 2.24 percent. This is an estimate of maximum error and for most items the percentages are likely to be even more accurate.

The data gathered by NASIS are used by a wide variety of State and local government agencies for policy and program planning and by faculty and students at the University of Nebraska and other colleges for research. No information identifying any respondent is released to any user and the strict confidentiality of individual respondents is rigidly enforced. While the final responsibility for the organization and structure of the survey and for reports produced under its name rests with the Bureau of Sociological Research, public agencies and University departments play an integral part in planning the survey through an Advisory Committee. Public organizations interested in membership on the Advisory Committee should contact the NASIS Study Director.

Funding for NASIS comes from the University of Nebraska, the Bureau of Sociological Research and State and local agencies which buy items and data analysis from the survey.

The NASIS surveys are repeated each year to measure changes in the quality of life in Nebraska. While there is a core of questions which is included every year, each survey has a large component of unique items which address specific topical issues. Plans for future years include reinterviewing the 1977 panel every two years to assess changes in their lives. Additional detail on the NASIS surveys regarding use of the survey data or cost of purchasing items on future surveys can be obtained by contacting the NASIS Study Director at the Bureau of Sociological Research or by sending for a copy of the 1983 NASIS Prospectus.

This report is based on data gathered for the Nebraska Prevention Center for Alcohol and Drug Abuse. The Nebraska Prevention Center for Alcohol and Drug Abuse is funded in part by a contract with the Division on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, Nebraska Department of Public Institutions.

Support for Programs Related to Alcohol Problems

During the past few years, alcohol related problems have received increased attention at the national, state and local levels of government. The many programs considered, funded and implemented by government and private agencies have been innovative, optimistic and often controversial. Legislation has been passed in a number of states, including Nebraska, to address the treatment, correction, punishment and licensing of behaviors involved with alcohol use and abuse.

In a random sampling of 1907 Nebraskans during the Spring of 1982 over one third of the sample stated that alcohol problems were "very serious" in their communities. Another forty percent indicated that alcohol problems were "pretty serious." Added to this concern of a majority of Nebraskans is the recent series of state government debates over DWI laws and effective treatment programs. With the passage of LB568 in April of 1982, the concerns of many Nebraskans in the area of drunk driving law enforcement and penalties were addressed.

The following report assesses the responses of 933 randomly sampled Nebraskans 18 years of age and over who participated in the Spring 1982 NASIS. These respondents represent one-half of the total sample who were given a separate set of questions related to alcohol intervention programs. These respondents were asked how effective they thought a wide range of specific programs and actions would be in reducing alcohol-related problems.

FINDINGS

Respondents were asked whether they saw each of the following programs as being "very effective," "somewhat effective," or "not at all effective"

in reducing alcohol-related problems: a) increase the legal drinking age to 21, b) increase the legal driving age to 18, c) reduce the number of liquor licenses, d) raise alcohol prices by 25% by increasing alcohol taxes, e) prohibit the sale of "2-fers" and "4-fers," f) reduce alcohol content in beer, g) prohibit the sale of beer in pitchers, h) produce beer in smaller cans, i) eliminate T.V. advertising of alcoholic beverages, j) place warning labels on alcohol beverage containers, k) increase the penalty for drinking and driving, 1) increase the enforcement of drunk driving laws, and m) increase alcohol education programs.

In addition, background information on respondent's age, sex, education level, rural or urban residence, and drinking behaviors was collected.

The most effective programs identified by Nebraskans involved law enforcement and punishment associated with drunk driving laws (see Table 1). This suggests that Nebraskans view alcohol related problems as associated with current rates of DWI arrests and accidents. Seventy percent of respondents identified increased enforcement of DWI laws as a very effective program and an additional 27 percent stated that this program would be at least somewhat effective. Similar percentages of respondents identified the increase of DWI penalties as very effective (67 percent) and 28 percent of all respondents identified this as at least somewhat effective. On April 14, 1982, just as this survey was concluding, the Nebraska Legislature voted to establish minimum penalties for people convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

One additional program received similarly high percentages of endorsement for reducing alcohol related problems: the increase of alcohol education programs. Some 46 percent of all respondents perceived this increase of programs as at least somewhat effective, while over 45 percent

rated this as a "very effective" program.

A second set of programs received generally modest support as "very effective" programs, but at least a majority of all respondents rated the following as at least "somewhat effective": eliminate television alcohol advertising (26 percent "very effective"); raise alcohol prices 25% through a tax (23 percent "very effective"); prohibit the sales of "2-fers" and "4-fers" (23 percent "very effective"); increase the legal drinking age to 21 (20 percent "very effective"); reduce the number of liquor licenses (19 percent "very effective"); and reduce the beer alcohol content (16 percent "very effective"). These programs more directly effect the actual consumption of alcohol in public places and are seen as effective by significantly fewer Nebraskans than are the programs involving education and enforcement.

Finally, the programs seen by the fewest Nebraskans as having an effect on alcohol-related problems are the following: increasing the driving age to 18 (15 percent "very effective"); warning labels on alcohol bottles (14 percent "very effective"); prohibit the sale of "pitchers" (12 percent "very effective"); and smaller beer cans (9 percent "very effective"). It should be noted, however, that when those rating programs as "very effective" or "somewhat effective" are combined, that each of these programs receives at least some support from over a third of all respondents. Thus, it seems likely that Nebraskans endorse a wide range of interventions as possible solutions to the alcohol-related problems of their communities.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

We next looked at these programs that were considered to be "very effective" for reducing alcohol-related problems across a number of demographic characteristics for respondents (see Table 2.). The five programs examined in detail for differences in responses were: greater enforcement of drunk driving laws, greater penalties for drunk drivers, increased

alcohol education programs, elimination of television advertising of alcohol and raising the legal drinking age to 21. Again, it is important to note the Spring, 1982 time frame for these responses, as this was a time period leading up to the passage of major state legislation involving drunk driving laws and enforcement.

Age

The respondents were categorized across four different age groupings, and substantial differences in opinions could be identified. Generally, the youngest age groups (18 to 20 years of age) were the least likely to describe any of the programs as "very effective." The most marked differences in opinion of the different age groups were over the elimination of television advertising, increased alcohol education and the enforcement of drunk driving laws. Older respondents were significantly more likely to see these programs as "very effective." Interestingly, there was little difference across age groups in the rating of an increased drinking age (to 21 years of age) as a "very effective" program. Overall, however, this program received significantly less enthusiastic response from all four age groups when compared to the other four programs.

Sex

Male and female respondents also differed in their ratings of program effectiveness. Female respondents were consistently more likely to see programs as potentially effective in four out of the five programs, with a markedly higher percentage of females rating alcohol education and enforcement of drunk driving laws as "very effective." Again, the suggestion to raise the drinking age to 21 showed little differential response

between male and females. This may reflect the low rating of effectiveness for this program in general.

Geographic Location

Geographic location (categorized as farming, rural non-farm, and urban residents) was not strongly associated with most differences in respondent ratings. The most notable differences were (1) that urban dwellers were more likely to rate each of the five programs as "very effective" and (2) that farm residents were significantly less likely to see drunk driving programs (either enforcement or penalties) as "very effective" programs for alcohol-related problems. While a majority of farm residents did rate enforcement of drunk driving laws (58%) and increased drunk driving penalties (55%) as "very effective" programs, these percentages were substantially below the percentage rates of rural non-farm and urban dwellers.

Drinkers and Non-Drinkers

One final question is the relationship between attitudes and the drinking behaviors of respondents. Generally, survey information on drinking behaviors suffers from a good deal of under-reporting of behaviors and so all such data must be looked at conservatively. We looked at a very gross measure of drinking behaviors and merely separated those people who drink on a fairly regular basis (once a week or more) from those people who never drink or who drink only on ceremonial occasions (fewer than one drink per month). Thus, our measure of "drinkers" only relates to those who do drink as a practice, rather than as an indicator of amount of alcohol consumed or the presence of alcohol-related problems. However, some interesting differences do occur in the attitudes of "drinkers" and "non-drinkers." Our "non-drinking" respondents consistently saw four of the five programs

more often as "very effective" in reducing alcohol-related problems. The program which "drinkers" saw more often as "very effective" was raising the drinking age to 21. This suggests that "non-drinkers" are slightly more optimistic about the ability of educational and law enforcement programs to reduce the alcohol-related problems of others.

Finally, we find that educational levels have very little relationship to the percentage of respondents who rated a program as "very effective."

SUMMARY

In review of these findings, it is evident that Nebraskans in general are fairly optimistic about the ability of some programs to reduce alcohol-related problems. In addition, we know that the majority of these same Nebraskans perceive their communities as having serious alcohol problems. Those programs most likely to be seen as effective were increased enforcement and penalties for drunk drivers, and increased alcohol education programs. Those programs seen as least likely to be effective were those prohibiting sales of "pitchers" of beer, the sale of smaller beer cans or the application of warning labels to alcohol containers.

Some general differences in opinions also were found, including:

1) Older respondents viewed the intervention programs as very effective more often than younger respondents, particularly in areas of drunk driving enforcement, penalties, alcohol education and elimination of television advertising.
2) Women respondents also rated programs as very effective far more often than their male counterparts. This was most marked in the areas of alcohol education and enforcement of drunk driving laws.

3) Among non-drinkers (those who drink only rarely or not at all) the intervention programs cited were also far more likely to receive endorsement. This suggests that drinkers are somewhat less optimistic about the effects of such programs.

4) Educational level and geographic residence appeared to have little impact on attitudes toward these programs. There was a greater tendency for urban and non-farm dwellers to see DWI enforcement and penalties as very effective programs of intervention.

Overall, the concern of Nebraskans for the alcohol-related problems of their communities is considerable. The wide range of intervention programs suggested on this survey indicates that some programs are more likely to be seen as effective than others. The general attempts to restrict alcohol intake through modification of containers (size limitations, warning labels) do not receive as much support as those which address the behaviors associated with alcohol problems (most specifically, DWI enforcement and penalties). In addition, the traditional programs of alcohol education, increasing the drinking age to 21, eliminating T.V. advertisements and the restriction of 2-fers, 4-fers, and liquor licenses in general, as well as raising alcohol prices through taxation, continue to receive considerable support among Nebraskans.

Table 1.
Effectiveness Ratings for Programs

Reduce Alcohol-Related Problems

(N = 933)

	% Somewhat Effective	% Very Effective
Enforce DWI Laws	27.6	70.1
Increase DWI Penalties	27.9	67.0
Increase Alcohol Education Programs	46.3	44.5
Increase Drinking Age to 21	48.0	20.0
Prohibit 2-fers and 4-fers	40.4	22.5
Eliminate T.V. Alcohol Advertisements	36.8	25.6
Raise Alcohol Prices Through a Tax	36.3	23.3
Reduce Number of Liquor Licenses	36.0	19.2
Reduce Beer Alcohol Content	37.3	15.9
Increase Driving Age to 18	34.5	15.4
Warning Labels on Alcohol Bottles	32.1	14.0
Prohibit Sales of Beer in Pitchers	27.2	11.8
Smaller Beer Cans	23.8	8.6

Table 2.
Background Characteristics of Respondents Rating a Program as "Very Effective"

		Enforce Drunk Driving Laws	Penalties for Drunk Driving	Increase Alcohol Education	Eliminate Television Advertise-ments	Increase Legal Drinking Age(to 21)
TOTAL		(70.1)	(67.0)	(44.5)	(25.6)	(20.0)
Age						
18-20	(67)	58.7	60.3	34.2	13.6	16.7
21-35	(335)	70.2	69.1	41.1	18.2	18.9
36-55	(298)	66.7	64.4	46.9	27.5	21.1
56+	(223)	72.6	68.1	44.9	33.4	19.5
Sex						
Male	(440)	43.5	62.4	38.8	21.3	20.2
Female	(484)	56.5	70.6	47.6	27.7	19.0
Drinker						
No	(73)	76.2	73.6	47.1	36.5	14.9
Yes	(846)	68.2	66.1	43.0	23.6	19.9
Education						
Less than high school	(146)	65.4	66.0	45.9	32.0	22.4
High School	(572)	68.7	66.4	43.8	23.0	19.9
A.A. Degree, 4 years College or Above	(220)	70.1	67.0	44.5	25.6	20.0
Rural-Urban						
Farm	(149)	58.0	55.2	36.5	22.9	18.7
Rural Non-Farm	(66)	67.2	65.9	37.8	19.6	12.5
Urban	(707)	71.3	69.2	45.3	25.5	20.4

List of reports already released using data gathered in the 1982 Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey. These may be purchased at the indicated price from the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Report Number	Title
1.	Designs, Procedures, Instruments and Forms for the 1982 NASIS. Helen A. Moore. Price: $7.50.
2.	Attitudes Toward Social Security. Warren Luckner. Price: $1.25.
3.	Community Colleges and Higher Education. Helen A. Moore. Price: $1.00.
4.	The Status of Older Nebraskans. Jane C. Ollenburger and the Bureau of Sociological Research. Price: $1.50.
5.	Social Responses to Scarcity. Alan Booth. Price: $1.00.
6.	A Look at Nebraskan's Favorite Outdoor Recreational Activities. David R. Johnson and Laurie K. Scheuble.
7.	Social Security and Government Spending: The Elderly Speak Out. Jane C. Ollenburger and the Bureau of Sociological Research. Price: $ .75.